

MERCY SECONDARY SCHOOL MOUNTHAWK

SPECIAL NEEDS POLICY INCLUSION POLICY

*Draft 5 - following meeting of Special needs committee:
teachers, BOM and parent Rep.*

*Finalisation of policy based on feedback and input by Tony Doyle (Head of SEN Mary Immaculate College) 31st
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Ratification by BOM on 12th June 2006

Review of policy – October '09 to February '10

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SECTION 1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 INTRODUCTION

1.1.a SCHOOL DESCRIPTION

Mercy Secondary School, Mounthawk is a Catholic Voluntary Secondary School under the Trusteeship of CEIST. We are a co-educational school. The school population is 1,170 students (approx).

1.1.b. AIMS

Our aims in developing this formal policy are to:

- Identify and codify the current procedures and practices in the school
- To comply with current regulations and legislation in this area
- To establish and disseminate a formal process and means of addressing issues around Learning Support in the school.

1.2 OPERATING CONTEXT

1.2.a MISSION STATEMENT.

Our commitment to supporting students with special needs is a feature of our general commitment developing the whole person as stated in the school Missions Statement:

'Mercy Mounthawk Catholic Voluntary Secondary School is a witnessing community which fosters:

- *The full potential of all staff and students*
- *A positive partnership between all members of the school and wider community*
- *The highest standards of teaching, learning and performance.'*

This commitment is understood within the terms of the CEIST charter which states that:

'The educational needs of the students are identified and suitable programmes and curricula are provided to meet the breadth of needs identified so that all students can participate with dignity and confidence.' (CEIST Charter p.14)

1.2.b The Legal Context.

This policy is prepared with reference to the following legislation: the Education Act 1998 (EA), the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 (EWA), the Equal Status Act 2000 (ESA), and the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004 (EPSEN).

1.2.c. The context of the School Admissions Policy.

The school operates ‘an open admissions policy, promoting equality of access participation and benefit for all, in as far as the school can fulfill the needs of an individual student’, (*Admissions Policy, Section 1.*) Our commitment to support students with special needs is outlined in our Admissions policy (*Section 9*) which states that ‘The Board of Management is committed to ensuring full entitlement and access for pupils with special education needs to high quality education with a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum, so that they can reach their full potential and enhance their self-esteem’. This is consonant with the provisions of the EPSEN 2004, (2) which provides that ‘a child with special educational needs shall be educated in an inclusive environment with children who do not have such needs unless the nature or the degree of those needs of the child is such that to do so would be inconsistent with (a) the best interests of the child in accordance with any assessment carried out under this act, or (b) the effective provision of education for children with whom the child is to be educated.

1.2.d. Definition of Special Needs used in this policy

‘Special Education Needs’ (SEN) means, in relation to a person, a restriction in the capacity of the person to participate in and benefit from education on account of an enduring physical, sensory, mental health or learning disability, or any other condition which results in a person learning differently from a person without that condition’ EPSEN 2004, 1-(1).

While this definition in the act does not refer to students with emotional behavioural difficulties, section 7 (4)(b) of ESA 2000 does indicate a category of special need in this case and the school will be mindful of such students also in providing for special needs in this policy.

Furthermore, EA 1998 recognises ‘giftedness’ as a special education condition and the school recognises that children who fit into this category have learning needs that that school will endeavour to respond to.

SECTION 2. GOALS for TEACHING and LEARNING within SEN

2.1 In accordance with our policy of full inclusion of all students, the SEN Department strives:

- a. To ensure full entitlement and access for pupils with special education needs to a high quality education with a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum, so that they can reach their full potential and enhance their self-esteem
- b. To meet the needs of all pupils who have special educational needs, by offering continual and appropriate forms of educational provision by the most efficient use of all available resources. In this we are also mindful of the needs of gifted students.

- c. To adopt a whole-school approach in educating pupils with learning difficulties, wherever possible, alongside their peers within the mainstream curriculum after giving due consideration to the wishes of the student, their parents and the recommendations of relevant professionals .
- d. To ensure that there is an appropriate system of identification and ongoing assessment of students with special educational needs by the SEN Team and subject teachers.
- e. To enable pupils with learning difficulties to acquire proficiency in literacy and numeracy skills as well as basic learning and study skills to enable them to fully participate in as complete an educational experience as is possible.
- f. To involve all stakeholders in the identification, assessment and delivery of support and to strive for close co-operation between all concerned.
- g. To stimulate and maintain pupil curiosity, interest in and enjoyment of their education

2.2 General philosophy of education within the SEN department

The SEN staff recognises that students have different learning styles, strengths and needs and endeavours to nurture self confidence conscious of kinesthetic, auditory, sensory, linguistic, visual and interpersonal intelligences. Lessons are conducted in a secure, supportive and disciplined environment. Students and staff interact in a manner that demonstrates mutual respect. The SEN Team believes that learning takes place most effectively in the context of a caring relationship and that good teacher/pupil relationships foster trust and promote self reliance and initiative in the student.

Self esteem is fostered through participation in activities outside the classroom: fund-raising, organization of school based events –talent competitions/magazine production.

SECTION 3. GENERAL PROCEDURES

3.1 Co-ordination of SEN in the school

SEN within the school mainly co-ordinated by the SEN team in conjunction with a number of key staff members whose roles are outlined in section 6 below.

- The Special Needs Team comprises the Deputy Principal with responsibility for Special Educational Needs, the SEN Co-Ordinator, five SEN teachers and Special Needs Assistants.

- Each SEN teacher takes responsibility for a year group: this entails being fully aware of every SEN student in a year group and thus being the key SEN contact person in relation to students in that year.
- Teachers, Year Heads, Management, parents and other relevant agencies are directed to this person to deal with reports, referrals, exam provisions, concessions etc.
- The Team works closely with the Principal, Deputy Principals, NEPS, Visiting Teachers and parents, in relation to in-house assessments, referrals for specialist assessments and general queries.

3.2 The Transfer Process

We seek to identify and assess pupils with learning difficulties as early and thoroughly as is possible and necessary in order to ensure that we can properly answer those needs. Therefore the school will open a dialogue with parents and the former school(s) attended by the student as early as possible, requesting all relevant information and reports in order to properly identify and assess needs. (EWA, 7a)

This dialogue begins on Admissions day, when parents are asked to bring any Educational Assessments and discuss the student's needs with the members of the SEN Department who attend that meeting. On the same day, all incoming first year students are given a Standardised Reasoning Test (verbal and numerical). The results allow for the identification of students who may have learning needs and who have not been identified by their parents or in Primary school. Members of the SEN Department are then in a position to contact the feeder National Schools and the parents for information.

Based on this identification process, school management then requests the DES to provide resources such as special needs assistants, specialised equipment, furniture, adequate accommodation, transport etc. so as to enable the school to discharge its duty adequately.

It is to be understood that the ability of the school to respond to the educational needs of any student applying for admission is contingent on the Department of Education supplying the appropriate facilities and resources to allow the school to answer that need. It may therefore be necessary for the Board of Management to defer enrolment of a student pending provision of appropriate resources by the DES to meet the needs of that student. (*Admissions Policy, Section 9*)

3.3 Further Identification of students with special Needs.

Further to the procedures in section 3.2 above and in accordance with section 14.1(e) EPSEN 2004, the school shall ensure that 'teachers and other relevant employees of the school are aware of the importance of identifying children and students who have special educational needs'.

3.3.a On entering the school all students undergo Standardised Reasoning Test results and screening tests (c.f. 3.4.b) on the basis of which the Special Needs Co-ordinator will refer any student (not already having a report) for assessment by NEPS as required.

3.3.b Teachers may refer students to the Special Needs coordinator on the basis of concerns regarding literacy or numerical ability. Teachers will use the Referral forms Staff Study to relay concerns to the Learning Support Co-ordinator, the First Year Head or the Deputy Principal regarding students in their classes. Such information is used to identify students who may need to be referred for diagnostic tests and ultimately for assessment by NEPS.

3.3.c Requests for assessment can also be made by the parents of students. Parents are informed of the procedures in the subject information handbook and at induction talks for 1st year parents. On making a request, parents will be asked to fill a referral form which is based on the official NEPS permission form. Appendix

Permission from parents will always be sought before assessments are carried out and the requisite official referral forms will be filled out. The usual procedures for referral to NEPS are followed thereafter.

3.4 Assessments

3.4.a Incoming assessment

All incoming students sit a standardised reasoning test. Bearing in mind the mixed ability composition of classes in 1st year, this assessment is used to assist in the identification of possible learning difficulties and to indicate particular learning aptitudes students may have.

Parents can receive their sons/daughters results by contacting the school.

3.4.b Screening tests

All 1st year students are screened in literacy and numeracy using a range of standardised (reading, spelling and maths skills) tests. This screening is used in conjunction with the initial assessment results to

- identify students who do not already have assessments, who may need to be referred
- to establish the reading and numerical ages of the students so as to assist in planning teaching targets and IEPs for those students who need them
- to provide a base level from which to evaluate the effectiveness of subsequent intervention in learning support.

3.4.c Diagnostic testing

Teachers who are taking learning support will conduct diagnostic tests in order to map progress of students through the year. This will feed into the IEP for the student.

3.5 Access to Special Needs Support

The following groups of student's qualify for Special Needs support in the school

- Students who have had a psychological assessment which recommends Learning Support / Resource teaching and who have been granted resource hours in either the low or high incidence categories.
- Students who have had a psychological assessment which recommends SNA hours and who have been granted this support.
- Students whose first language is not English and who have been granted hours by the DES for language acquisition.
- Students from the Traveller Community who have been granted hours.

- Students who have a psychological assessment which recommends Learning Support, but who have not been granted resource hours will be accommodated in Learning Support or subject support grouping from the general allocation in as far as possible.
- Students who do not have an assessment but who have received Learning support in Primary school are given consideration in as far as resources allow.
- Students who have been identified in the initial Standardised testing who are under the 10 percentile mark and who in consultation with parents and teachers are viewed as requiring support.
- Consideration is also given to students with emotional and behavioral difficulties for whom an IBP may be appropriate.

In allocating resources priority will be given to students

- in the low incidence and high incidence categories and those others to whom hours have been granted hours by the SENO
- afterwards to those with assessments (though not granted hours)
- and thereafter to those under 10 percentile in as far as resources allow.

3.6 Organisation of Class Grouping and Learning support.

3.6.a General class groupings

- In 1st year a mixed ability policy is in place for all classes.
- In 2nd and 3rd year, classes are banded. This banding is carried out on the basis of the results of the Christmas and Summer assessments in 1st year and on the basis of subject choices and the construction of option blocks.
- Transition year operates on a mixed ability basis.
- In 5th and 6th year, the base classes are constructed on the basis of options for courses such as L.C.V.P., and are usually mixed ability. Students are set into honors and pass class grouping, in as far as possible, for subject blocks in English, Irish, Maths and Languages.

3.6.b Groupings for SEN. Currently there is a mix of modes of provision of support in operation:

- **INDIVIDUAL WITHDRAWAL** is used where a student requires specialised individual support.

- **SMALL GROUP WITHDRAWAL** is the preferred method of provision with most students in resource and learning support getting their allocation in small groups. The organisation of these groupings is the job of the SEN Co-ordinator in co-operation with the SEN Team. Groups are arranged on the basis of similar need profiles and the capacity to withdraw students at the same time.

Withdrawal for small groups usually occurs during Irish for those students who are exempt and during continental language for those not doing a language.

- **GROUP PROVISION** is used in 2nd and 3rd year where groups of students are given Maths and English against Maths and English in clusters in order to allow for a foundation class or a supported pass class in these core subjects.
- **TEAM TEACHING IN SUBJECT CLASSES**
Increasingly subject support provision is provided with the extra teacher going into the classroom and supporting the teaching and learning of individuals or small groups in the general classroom.
- **REDUCED CURRICULUM** . A small number of students, whom it is deemed, after consultation with the NEPS psychologist, parents and teachers, cannot sustain a full curriculum, have their curriculum reduced. This provision is normally supplied in 2nd year. The class periods available as a result of reduced curriculum are employed to give subject support and literacy/numeracy support.

3.7 ICT in Special Needs

Regard has been given to the development of ICT facilities for the SEN students in the school.

3.7.a By individual students

Applications are made to the SENO for students who require adaptive or assistive technology on the basis of Educational Assessments or O.T. reports. Training in the use of these technologies is facilitated through the visiting teachers.

3.7.b By the department

An interactive whiteboard has been installed for use in the SEN department. The department maintain a data base of students with SEN and attainments.

3.8 Curricular Provision

The school seeks to provide a broad curriculum which is designed to meet the varying needs and abilities of the students in Mounthawk. We provide the traditional Junior Certificate programme with a broad range of subjects, both academic and practical. All subjects are available to all students in an open choice structure. Option blocks are designed on a 'best fit' basis. All subjects are offered to honors and ordinary level and at foundation level where relevant.

Curriculum is reduced for SEN students only after consultation with NEPS, parents and teachers on the basis of an IEP. The school had been granted a Special class for MGLD, but this was withdrawn after the last budget.

In Senior cycle, we offer the full suite of Senior Cycle Programmes; Traditional Leaving Certificate, Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme and the Leaving Certificate Applied.

3.9 Special Programmes

Though the school has lost DAS status, we have endeavored to maintain as many of the special programmes which were established under that scheme as possible with diminished resources. The remaining programmes are now administered by a volunteer parent group with the assistance of the SEN department and the DP in charge of Student support. This grouping has been called the Home School Parent Committee (HSPC).

3.9.a. Transition to secondary school

OK Lets Go Programme

This programme was designed to facilitate the transition to Secondary school for students. The target group for this programme is identified by the HSCL teacher through contact with the feeder national schools. This programme has been lost with the loss of the HSCL co-ordinator.

3.9.b. Support Programmes within the school

Paired Reading Initiative

The Special Needs Team runs a Peer-Reading Programme for first year students who are reluctant or poor readers. Transition Year students volunteer to engage in the programme with first years. Peer mentors receive training prior to initiation of the programme: it is supervised by members of the SEN team. Consent from parents/guardians is sought prior to commencement of the programme.

Social Club

A Social Club is run voluntarily by members of the SEN team on a twice weekly basis. Students who need a structured ‘haven’ in which to develop interpersonal skills and to simply relax avail of this facility.

The SEN team has built links with the neighboring special needs school.

Maths for Fun Programme

Under the auspices of the Home School Parent Committee and Special Needs Team, a ‘maths for fun’ programme is run for students in 1st year with special needs in this area.

3.10. Guidance and transition to Third level programmes

3.10.a *Pathfinder Programme*

The pathfinder programme is run by the Guidance Department in conjunction with I.T.T.

This programme is targeted at the same cohort as the Access programme and is designed to stimulate interest in continuing in education among a group who are in danger of not progressing to Senior Cycle. The group is identified through the Career

Guidance Department in the school and students and parents are approached and encouraged to join. A letter is circulated to all 3rd year students to allow for self-identification also.

The course looks at career interest and capacity and seeks to clarify student's intentions to progress in education.

3.10.b UCC Plus programme

We are linked to the UCC Access programme since 2002. The programme is designed to target able students who, for a variety of reasons, are under-represented at third level and to provide motivational, educational and financial assistance to them to enhance their ability to compete for college places.

The target group includes students from the following backgrounds: long-term unemployment, low family income, little or no family tradition of progression to higher Education and under-represented socio-economic groups in higher Education.

A letter is circulated to all 6th year parents in first term of sixth 6th year and students self-select for inclusion in this programme. All students attend an orientation and information talk from the Access Officers in UCC in December. Students who self-select have the opportunity to apply to college using HEAR (Higher Education Access Route).

4.1 Provision for 'More Able' Students.

4.1.a Context of Provision

A review, as part of the school development process in 2007, based on the booklet "Looking at our schools: an aid to self evaluation in second level schools" brought us to reflect that we had not given focused attention to the 90-100 grouping within the classroom setting. As part of the policy, the school decided to focus primarily on developing differentiation strategies that teachers could use to challenge "more-able" students in a classroom setting.

Despite the fact that students with exceptional ability are omitted from the EPSEN Act, the school bases its policy on the Education Act 1998 which acknowledges that "special educational needs" means the educational needs of students who have a disability and the educational needs of exceptionally able students" (Part 1 Section 2). (*c.f. 1.2.d. above*).

4.1.b Definition

As part of our policy, we decided to use as a guide the definition as outlined in the Special Education Review Committee (1993) and also used in the NCCA guidelines which make reference to "exceptionally able or talented" children and providing the following definition:

- General intellectual ability
- Specific Academic Aptitude
- Creative or productive thinking

- Leadership ability
- Visual and Performing Arts
- Mechanical aptitude
- Psychomotor ability, e.g. in athletics, gymnastics.

The following caveat was also added by The Review Committee:

*“Pupils who are exceptionally able or talented form part of the overall pupil population. As such any decision to adopt a specific degree of endowment or performance as a criterion for inclusion among those who would be described as exceptionally able or talented must be arbitrary. Insofar as a score on an intelligence test can be regarded as an indicator, we suggest that the description “exceptionally able” be used to denote pupils with an IQ score in the range of 130 and above. **It is our opinion, however, that adopting a precise cut off point can have little practical application”***

Keeping the indicators outlined above in mind and the NCCA recommendation that exceptionally-able would typically include 5-10% of the school population, we have broadened our definition to include 10 percent of the school population as initially identified by the testing and also students identified by teachers as possessing exceptional ability in a particular subject area. We also decided to adopt the term “more-able” as opposed to “gifted and talented” to acknowledge this broader definition.

4.1.c Identification

Two main sources of identification are used to identify the more-able students.

Testing

Testing is used in the first instance. Students sit the CAT3 test in the March prior to commencing school the following September and the DRGT test in September. The students who score in the top ten percent in both or either of these tests are initially identified as being more-able. However, the results of these tests are used with caution, as there can be significant variation in the results. Also the tests are limited in their scope and do not test for exceptional ability in sport, music or art.

Teacher Identification

In accordance with NCCA guidelines, we use teacher identification as a means of identification. Through department meetings, teachers are asked to use indicators from the NCCA guidelines to identify students with particular ability in their subject area. These students can be added to the list.

4.1.d Provision for more-able students

Differentiation

The main provision for more-able students is through differentiation in the classroom. A team of teachers have completed both an ICEPE course on gifted and talented education and received inservice in differentiation methods from the SESS through a pilot Learning Schools Programme. These methods can be used to extend the more able students in the mainstream classroom. Some of the resources created by these teachers are available for teachers to access on the school intranet site. Examples of

differentiation methods include: peer and self assessment, self evaluation, KWL Grids. Currently this lead group of teachers is working on resources that can be used by all members of departments.

A team of teachers are also involved in a working group on Assessment for Learning principles. The principles of AFL are being adopted to extend the more-able. Teachers have also been trained in metacognition another educational methodology that has been identified as being helpful for exceptionally able students.

Enrichment

A variety of extra-curricular clubs and societies exist to enrich students who are more-able in particular subject areas. Science club, public speaking and debating as well as a variety of sporting activities are examples of what are available. Students are encouraged to enter the Scifest competition, BT Young Scientist, the Maths and Science Olympiad, Concern and Mental Health Debating, Sean Dunne Creative Writing etc. (See Extra Curricular Policy). More-able students with particular aptitudes in particular areas are encouraged to participate in these clubs and societies and to enter these competitions. (*c.f. Extra-curricular Policy*)

Mentoring

A mentoring programme aimed at engaging underachieving more-able students is currently being piloted. Students who have been identified as possessing exceptional ability but who appear to be underachieving are encouraged to participate in the mentoring programme. As part of the programme a teacher-mentor meets with the individual student on a regular basis to set targets, to organise study and to try to promote more positive attitudes to school.

SECTION 5 . EAL PROVISION

See associated Literacy and Numeracy policy.

SECTION 6 . THE YEARLY SEN TIMETABLE

The following timetable is implemented in as far as possible each year in providing for the needs for SEN students in the school

June / July	Preparation of folders and special texts for SEN students – co-ordinated by the SEN team and delivered by the SNAs.
August	The SEN team works with Management on timetabling of students with special educational needs. Consultation over timetabling of teachers and students for SEN for the coming year. Initial preparation of IEPs for SEN students for the coming year. [SEN Co-ordinator and Management]
September	SEN Team administer literacy and mathematical screening tests to First Years

September	Finalisation of allocation of hours to students and timetables for teachers and students for SEN provision. [Co-ordinator and SEN Team]
September	Finalisation of list for exemption from Irish. Identification and regularisation of incoming student situations. [Career Guidance Team]
September/Oct.	Development of the detail of IEPs with the teachers allocated to specific year group Adjustment of IEPs based on consultation with parents and teachers. [The SEN team will oversee the plans in respective years.]
Oct	Exam students are administered the Whole Range Assessment Test (WRAT) as advised by NEPS and Career Guidance Counselor with responsibility for applications for Reasonable Accommodation in the State Examination (RASE)
Nov/December	Application to the Reasonable Accommodation Certificate State Examinations Section for SEN students examination needs, junior and senior, [Career Guidance Counsellor]
Jan/Feb	Initial schedule of DES staff adjustments. [Principal/Deputy Principal]
Feb	Application for continuous additional teaching and/or SNA support for the next year to SENO. SN2 forms [The Deputy Principal with responsibility for SEN]
March (after Admissions day)	Application for new teaching support/SNA hours SN1 forms to be processed after assessments have been received from incoming students. [SEN Coordinator and Management] Consultation with parents and feeder schools to get the assessments in time for the submission – end of March.
March	Application for additional 1.5 hrs per week per Traveller pupils enrolled. [Principal]
March	Application for additional teaching hours for students for whom English is an additional language (EAL students). Additional Language deficit of ethnic minority newcomer students. [Principal]
March	Discussion with SEN students over subject choice and number of subjects etc. for the transfer into 2 nd year and 5 th year. Finalisation of the subject option choice forms with the students and parents. Submission of forms to the Options Team. [SEN Coordinator and Career Guidance Consellers]
May	Consultation over grouping of students in 1 st , 2 nd and 5 th year for the provision of special education for the coming year.

Design of small groups and classes to be negotiated. [SEN Coordinator, SEN Team and Management.]

May An informal review of IEP will take place in January. A full review of IEPs for students takes place in May. Parents, Year Head and teachers involved with student-outside agencies when necessary]

During the Year Identification of new students who require assessments or reviews. [processed by Management and SEN staff]

SECTION 7. IEP - INDIVIDUAL EDUCATION PLANS.

Section 9 of the EPSEN Act (2004) relating to IEP provision has not yet commenced and we await guidelines from the Council in this regard. In the interim we are using templates provided by NEPS and the JMB/AMCSS education offices and guidelines provided by the National Disability Authority (Dec 2005) [c.f attachments]

7.1 Guiding Principles

In accordance with the EPSEN Act 2004, where an assessment establishes that a student has SEN, the principal must, within one month, 'cause a plan to be prepared for the appropriate education of the student'. It is the responsibility of the principal to ensure that the plan is prepared.

IPEs are developed for students who have been allocated hours by the SENO on the basis of an assessment.

7.2 Student Profiling

7.2.a We have trialled various profiling approaches over the last few years and we have created a final draft of the profiling template (appendix 1) which we are currently using.

Profiles are developed for students who have been allocated hours by the SENO on the basis of an assessment. Parents and students are invited to consult with the SEN team and school management on Admissions Day. Parents are advised to bring assessments and relevant data that they wish to release to the school and permission is granted to share this information with relevant personnel: the SENO, the SEN Team, Management and teachers who will be dealing with their child.

To inform and develop provision for student profiles, members of the SEN team, management and when required, the student's Year Head and NEPs Psychologist meet as necessary. Contact is maintained with parents/guardians as the student timetable and targets are created and later reviewed

An SEN database contains information on all SEN students: the names of students in receipt of support; hours allocated to them by the DES: the nature of the SEN and date

of most recent assessment. A new more comprehensive database is being created: this will be used to input information on incoming first years 2010-2011.

7.2.b Planning

The intention of the IEP is to identify modification to the general educational programme that is necessary to meet the student's needs. Team members prepare by considering their long term goals for the student which can then be developed into targets for the IEP.

7.2.c Implementation

It will be usual to appoint a lead person in the team to facilitate and monitor the practical implementation of the plan. This person will communicate the teachers involved in the plan.

7.2.d Evaluation / Review

IEPs are reviewed at regular intervals and at least once a year. The purpose of the review is to establish if the student has received the services set out in the EP and that he/she is achieving the goals set out therein. This is done with a view to amending the plan for the following period. The Principal has responsibility to ensure that a copy of the reviewed plan is presented to the parents.

7.2.e Transfer to further education or to adult or working life.

As part of the review of an IEP, consideration will be given, where appropriate, to the issue of transfer to further education or into working life. In accordance with EPSEN (2004), section 15, (1), when a student reaches 'such an age as the Principal or organiser considers appropriate' regard must be taken of 'provision which will need to be made to assist the child to continue his or her education or training on becoming an adult'.

To fulfil this aim, the school will work in conjunction with the parents and the SENO where appropriate to

- Ascertain the wishes of the student and his/her parents
- To plan for the steps necessary to enable the student to progress as a young adult to 'the level of education or training that meets his or her wishes or those of his or her parents and that are appropriate to his or her needs.' EPSEN, 2004, section 15 (2).

SECTION 8. INVOLVEMENT OF THE EDUCATIONAL PARTNERS

8.1 ROLES OF STAFF

a. Board of Management

Ensuring that the policies and practices in the school are inclusive and in compliance with the legislation in the area.

b. Principal

Ensures that the school is fully accessible to all students.

Is responsible for the provision of all Learning support provision in the school, through the delegation of specific roles as outlined below.

Is responsible for the allocation of learning support hours to teachers.

Is responsible for the employment of teachers and SNAs to fill the DES provision.

Applies for grants / appropriate equipment for SEN students.

c. Deputy Principal with responsibility for students Support

Responsibility for timetabling provision for Learning Support.

Responsible for the submission of SN1 and SN2 forms, application for hours for EAL students and Travellers and SNA applications.

Responsibility for Subject options and the setting of class groups.

Responsibility for liaising with external service providers: NEPS, SENO, Health Service Executive etc.

Responsibility for the development of the Learning support policy.

Organises, in conjunction with Special needs co-ordinator, individual assessments with NEPS

The Deputy Principal with responsibility for SEN and the SEN Team meet every week to: plan, prepare and evaluate SEN services provided in the school: to apply to the Department of Education and Science (DES) for resource hours and assistive technologies and to profile students on an on-going basis.

d. Guidance Counsellors

Oversee and organise the administration of the standardised tests on admissions day.

Co-ordinate the exemptions from Irish and the reasonable accommodations for the state examinations.

Oversee the Pathfinder and Access programmes in the school.

e. Subject teachers

EPSEN (2004) states that students with special needs shall whenever possible be educated 'in an inclusive environment with those who do not have such needs'. Circular Special Education 24-03 indicates that regardless of what special educational need a child may have, or who may be involved in supporting that need, **the classroom subject teacher retains primary responsibility for all the students in his/her classroom**. The classroom subject teachers will always have responsibility for teaching all the students all the curricular content.

Subject teachers are therefore cognisant of the learning difficulties of students in their classes and make allowances for this in the delivery of the course material and in assessment and feedback to students.

The concept of differentiation is central to the approach of teachers in the classroom in responding to individual SEN,

Subject teachers will co-ordinate with members of the Special Needs team to plan the support and differential programme for students. As part of this process, subject teachers will participate in the ongoing assessment of students for the purposes of identification, establishing baselines and progress.

Subject teachers may be timetabled to take a number of support classes per week. These teachers work with the small groups allocated to them by the Learning Support

Co-ordinator and subject teacher and follow the programme indicated in subject support.

f. The SEN Team

- Members of the SEN team share the workload by each taking responsibility for a year group.
- The SEN Co-ordinator works with the SEN team members and Management in profiling incoming students; consulting parents, primary schools and relevant professionals-the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) the Visiting Teacher Service (VTS) the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) the National Education Welfare Board (NEWB) the Special Educational Support Service (SESS) or other relevant agencies
- The SEN team administer a variety of standardized tests to assess students and monitor progress throughout the year
- The SEN Team work in an advisory capacity with management in timetabling SEN students and allocating Resource hours at all levels
- The SEN team is available on Admissions Day: to meet parents of incoming students and the students; to record information and to collate reports and paper work; to help supervise Assessments given to first years that day.
- The team works in a consultative role among teaching colleagues. The SEN team share their knowledge and expertise formally at staff meetings and informally as required when consulted.
- Each August/September the SEN team share information concerning incoming and existing students and compiles a register of SEN students illustrating individual assessed special needs.
- Subject teachers who are concerned about students are encouraged to communicate their concern through the SEN teacher responsible for the year in which the student is placed. Teachers should fill a Teacher Referral Form available in the Staff Study.
- Parents also refer their son/daughter either directly through the SEN Co-ordinator or the Year Head for assessment by the SEN Dept.
- The SEN Team has input into the Reasonable Accommodation for Certificate Examinations (RACE) Copies of assessments and results of tests administered by the SEN team are given to the Career Guidance Teacher with responsibility for R.A.C.E.
- The SEN team identify students who would benefit from participating in Paired Reading with their parents –this is then organized and monitored by

volunteers from the Parents Council. The team also identify students who would benefit from the Maths for Fun Programme.

- The SEN team in collaboration with the Transition Year Co-Ordinator run a Peer-Reading Intervention Programme involving 4th years volunteers. Fourth years are prepared prior to commencement of the project. Consent is sought from parents/guardians of first years who have been identified as having literacy difficulties.
- There are plans to work with first year students as part of the first year Transition Programme in the area of study and study skills. Tentative steps were taken in December 2009, in collaboration with the first year Year Head, to prepare students for study prior to in-house exams.
- Members of the SEN team run a lunchtime Social Club twice weekly for 25 students, to promote social interaction skills and to provide a safe haven and a structured setting for some students. Trips are organized two/three times a year

Access to Psychological Reports/IEPs Assessments

- In accordance with section 3.5 Inclusion of Students with Special Educational Needs Post Primary Guidelines, teachers have access to all information that ‘is likely to be relevant to teaching or supervising a student with special educational needs, including psychological reports and other confidential documents’.
- The SEN team prepares folders containing psycho-educational summaries, professional recommendations, suggested methodologies and teaching resources for each student. This information is made available only for the teachers of these students.

g. Learning Support Co-ordinator

Has responsibility for the co-ordination of the SEN Learning support department.

Co-ordinates the collection of assessments of incoming students and works with parents and feeder schools to identify students with special needs

Works with the Deputy Principal in the allocation of students to classes and the allocation of students to individual Support TT teachers.

Works with the SEN Team, parents and others in developing IEPs for the students.

Co-ordinates with teachers on the specifics of learning support programmes.

Co-ordinates the provision of resources for Learning Support in the school.

They can be involved in team teaching and cooperative teaching with subject teachers.

h. Special Needs Assistants

Care for students with special needs – work can vary depending on the individual’s needs: from supporting students in practical subjects, to organising homework, books, monitoring attendance at classes, assisting students in classes or providing the possibility for withdrawal of students from classes, liaison with teachers regarding

work to be completed etc... Decisions on the specific role of the SNA are made on a case by case basis.

i. Post Holders

New posts have been created for co-ordinators for designated groups of students including Traveller pupils and Non-National pupils for a number of reasons:

- (a) it has been recognised that support is required in certain cases to organize books, materials, uniform etc...
- (b) some students require assistance in settling into the school and it is important that they have a designated person with whom to connect.
- (c) These posts also have a pastoral aspect.

8.2 PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

As primary educators of the student, the school recognized the central importance of the involvement of parents in addressing the special educational needs of students at the school. The school believes that the effectiveness of any assessment or intervention will be influenced by the involvement and interest of the child and his/her parents.

On Admissions Day, information on special needs provision in the school is passed on to parents/guardians. Information booklets make parents aware of the special concessions and accommodations available to students in state examinations. Parents are invited to contact the Learning Support department during the year in addition to meeting the Learning support teachers at Parent/teacher meetings. Parents are always contacted if a student is to be referred for assessment and afterwards to discuss the outcome of the assessment, the development of an IEP and the review of the IEP.

8.3 STUDENT INVOLVEMENT

In general, students are informed of their placement in special needs groupings by the Special Needs Coordinator. Often, students will know, coming into the school, that they have an Educational Assessment and will have spoken to the relevant personnel along with their parents as part of the transition process.

In the case of a student who is referred for assessment through the school, we will discuss with the parent/guardian what is the best way to approach informing the student.

Students can be involved in IEP preparation. Their input can include what they think needs to be worked on, how they think improvements can happen, what their strengths and needs are.

8.4 LINKS WITH OUTSIDE AGENCIES AND SERVICES

The EPSEN Act (2004) assures interlinking provision between the National Council for Special Education Needs (NCSE) the National Education Welfare Board (NEWB) and the Health Executive and school.

In accordance with the Act, the school will work with the local SENO, the local NEPS psychologist, the local Visiting Teachers for Travellers, the visually impaired and the hearing impaired, psychologists or psychiatrists from the Social Welfare Department and the Health Executive and any other relevant professionals in providing an integrated response to the needs of any particular student.

It will be customary to hold case meetings with relevant professionals with the permissions and knowledge of the student's parents (and their attendance) in order to determine the best approach and provision for the students in question.

The arrangements for such meetings will, at present, be coordinated by the Deputy Principal and permission sought from the parents in advance.

Notes from such meetings will be recorded and maintained in the student's file.

SECTION 9. MONITORING, EVALUATION, REPORTING

Monitoring and evaluation of interventions for students will be conducted as an integral part of the IEP programme in place. Student progress will also be monitored through teacher assessment in the usual manner.

Monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of procedures adopted under this policy, will be done on a yearly basis. The Special Needs Department will conduct a yearly review of procedures in May each year on the basis of which proposals for development and improvement will be adopted. Such reflective practice will be ongoing within the SEN department.

SECTION 10. DATA PROTECTION AND RECORD KEEPING

Individual files are kept on each student who has been engaged with by the Special Education team in the school. Information in the files includes psychological reports, results from entrance assessments, in-school assessments, correspondence between the school, parents and other relevant agencies, and applications for support and concessions.

(a) Hard Copies

Two complete sets of files are maintained as verifiable evidence, one by the Deputy Principal and the other by the SEN Learning Support Department. Files will be kept indefinitely, since currently there is no statute of limitations on possible cases in this area.

(b) Computer Records

A new computer based data base for Special Needs has been developed in the school which will contain information on all special needs students. This data base has been developed in order to facilitate information sharing between the personnel involved in providing the service in this area.

(c) Access to files

Currently only the following personnel have access to the data (hard copy and computer based): the school principal, the Deputy Principals, members of the Special Needs department, the Year Heads and the Guidance Counsellors. The maintenance of files is subject to the provisions of the data policy in the school.

(d) Communication of information to subject teachers

Beyond these individuals, information regarding special needs is communicated to teachers on a need to know basis. In accordance with section 14.(1.d) of the EPSEN Act 2004, the school 'shall ensure that all relevant teachers and other relevant employees of the school are aware of the special educational needs of students'. Communication of needs of individual students to their teachers is carried out at the staff meeting at the start of each academic year. It is the responsibility of individual subject teachers to follow up on identification and ascertain further information regarding individual students from the files made available to them by the SEN Team Learning Support team. Other newly identified students are notified to the teachers as the year progresses. This is the responsibility of the Special Needs Coordinator and SEN TTeam.

SECTION 11. RESOURCES AND CPD

The school is committed to the continuing upskilling of the staff to ensure

- that the staff are supported to give confidence in developing inclusive practice.
- That inclusion appears on the agenda of school development planning.

A programme of CPD is adopted in the school as part of the overall school development plan.

Staff Inservice –

- Differentiation
- Assessment for Learning
- Profexcel Course on the Gifted and Talented

Appendix 1

Glossary of Terms

DES – Department of Education and Science

NEPS – National Educational Psychological Service

SENO Special Education Needs Officer

SEN – Special Education Needs

IBP – Individual Behaviour Plan

IEP – Individual Education Plan

Appendix 2

Materials consulted in the development of this policy:

Test Materials Grant Circular M23/05

Purchase of equipment for students with disability Circular M14/05

Reasonable accommodations Information Circular S70/00

Learning Support – Professional Development Circular TES07/05

Exemption from Irish Circular M10/94

Application for SNA Circular 07/02

The Education Act 1998,

The Education (Welfare) Act 2000,

The Equal Status Act 2000

The Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004 (EPSEN)

International Experience in the Provision of individual Education plans for Children with Disabilities: Summary Report Dec. 2005